

Buffalo Grove, IL - Rep. Mark Kirk (R-IL), a member of the powerful House Appropriations Committee, was joined today by Metra General Development Director Jack Groner and local leaders in announcing House Appropriations Committee approval of \$52 million in funding for Metra to upgrade commuter rail service in Northern Illinois. The money is part of a full funding agreement committed to Metra by the White House and the Department of Transportation. Congressman Kirk fought hard for this funding as it will specifically be used to improve three existing rail lines that serve the Chicago area: The North-Central Line, Southwest Service and Union Pacific West Line. The Senate Appropriations Committee still must approve the funding before funds are released.

"Updating our transportation infrastructure is essential to reducing highway gridlock and improving our environment," said Congressman Kirk who represents many of the communities located along the North-Central commuter rail line. "With these funds, our fight to reduce traffic gridlock in Northern Illinois continues. I urge the Senate Appropriations Committee to act quickly so these funds can be released to Metra and we can get to work on increasing rail service and decreasing traffic congestion."

The North-Central line, currently running only four trains in and out of the city during rush hour, will receive \$20 million to continue construction of a second mainline track. When completed, it will meet strong demand by doubling the North-Central's passenger capacity, reducing the number of cars on our highways and improving air quality. The money committed to the North-Central Line will also be used to build additional stations along the route and for track and signal upgrades.

The additional \$32 million will pay for an extension of the Union Pacific West Line from Geneva to Elburn and an extension of the Southwest Service from Orland Park to Manhattan.

"Completion of these rail projects will pull thousands of cars off our congested highways and improve air quality," said Kirk. "Improving area transportation and air quality are two important issues facing our community. Increased rail service will ease traffic congestion, and have a positive effect on our environment while addressing our priorities under the Clean Air Act."

Total cost of constructing a second mainline track along the North-Central Line is \$225 million. The federal government has agreed to fund sixty-percent of the project with \$57.4 million

committed so far to the North-Central under a full-funding agreement running through Fiscal Year 2006. The remainder of the funding needed to complete these projects will come from the state and local taxes and fees.